

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 SP-02 INR-07

CIAE-00 L-03 IO-13 PRS-01 EB-07 TRSE-00 OMB-01

IGA-02 PM-04 DODE-00 /082 W

-----091154Z 129394 /50L

R 090928Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3024

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 12604

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EAGR, VM

SUBJ: THE FOOD SITUATION IN VIET-NAM

REF: VIENTIANE 892

SUMMARY: THE SRV HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN ABLE TO SECURE AGREEMENT TO OBTAIN FROM ABROAD 800,000 TONS OF GRAIN TO REDRESS A 1.2 MILLION TON GRAIN DEFICIT IN 1977. END SUMMARY.

1. A RECENT VISITOR TO HANOI WITH EXTENSIVE PRIOR EXPERIENCE IN VIET-NAM RECOUNTED TO EMBOFF THAT VIETNAMESE AND DIPLOMATIC SOURCES TOLD HIM ABOUT THE PRESENT DROUGHT SITUATION AND RESULTING FOOD SHORTAGE. THE PICTURE HE WAS PRESENTED IS A FAIRLY BLEAK ONE.

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2. ACCORDING TO SOURCE'S CONTACTS, THE DROUGHT IS VIET-NAM'S WORST SINCE THE LATE 1950'S. THE HEART OF THE DROUGHTSTRICKEN AREA IS, OF COURSE, CENTRAL VIET-NAM, EXTENDING FROM THANH HOA PROVINCE TO NGHIA BINH PROVINCE. FRINGE AREAS SUCH AS PRODUCTIVE THAI BINH (ADJACENT TO HAIPHONG) ARE ALSO AFFECTED. THERE IS GROWING CONCERN OVER THE INCREASING DRYNESS AND LATENESS OF THE RAIN IN THE AREA AROUND SAIGON, AS WELL.

3. THE SRV'S 1976 GRAIN DEFICIT WAS 500,000 TONS. THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TOLD OUR SOURCE THAT HIS GOVERNMENT MADE UP APPROXIMATELY ONE-HALF OF IT AND OBSERVED ACIDLY THAT THE PRC GAVE NOTHING.

4. THIS YEAR'S DEFICIT IS PROJECTED TO BE 1.2 MILLION TONS. BOTH THE USSR AND PRC HAVE REPORTEDLY AGREED TO PROVIDE 150,000 TONS OF GRAIN A PIECE, THE FORMER DOING SO ON A GRANT BASIS AND THE LATTER ON A SALE BASIS. WESTERN COUNTRIES SUCH AS CANADA, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND TO A LIMITED EXTENT THE EASTERN EUROPEANS, HAVE AGREED TO SELL OR GIVE TO THE SRV ANOTHER 500,000 TONS OF GRAIN. THIS LEAVES A DEFICIT OF SOME 400,000 TONS. IN THIS CONNECTION, SOURCE OBSERVED ENTHUSIASM WITH WHICH VIETNAMESE WELCOMED WORLD FOOD PROGRAM REPRESENTATIVE TONY COMO (REFTEL) UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN HANOI JUNE 4.

5. CURRENT PROBLEM IS THAT THE 800,000 TONS OF GRAIN ALREADY PLEDGED OR CONTRACTED ARE SLOW IN ARRIVING, SO THAT SUPPLIES ARE PARTICULARLY SHORT AT THE PRESENT TIME. SOURCE CLAIMED THAT PORT OF HAIPHONG IS NOW RESERVED FOR FOOD SHIPMENTS, ONLY. GRAIN IS RECEIVING FIRST PRIORITY IN THE PORT OF DANANG. THEREFORE, AN INCREASING NUMBER OF NON-FOOD SHIPMENTS IS BEING DIVERTED TO SAIGON, CAUSING OFFICES TO WHICH IT IS DESTINED IN HANOI--WHO OFTEN HAVE ENOUGH HEADACHES GETTING THEIR SHIPMENTS FROM HAIPHONG--BEMOANING THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE NO IDEA WHEN OR HOW THEIR INCOMING SHIPMENTS WILL EVER BE EXPEDITED FROM SAIGON.

6. SOURCE SAID THE SHORTAGE OF GRAIN EXISTS NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF
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THE DROUGHT BUT BECAUSE, COMPARED TO THE SITUATION IN THE PRC, DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY'S (PRESUMABLY THE NORTH'S) IRRIGATION AND HYDROELECTRIC NETWORK REMAINS AT SUCH A RUDIMENTARY STAGE. IN ORDER TO FURNISH SUFFICIENT ELECTRICITY TO OPERATE PUMPS, HANOI IS NOW ENJOYING ELECTRIC POWER FOR ONLY TWELVE HOURS PER DAY.

7. IN CLOSING, HE SAID THAT PRESENT SHORTAGE APPEARS TO HAVE MADE VIETNAMESE EVEN MORE AWARE OF FACT THAT THEY CANNOT REALISTICALLY DEPEND ON ONLY ONE COUNTRY FOR ASSISTANCE, SINCE IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THOSE COUNTRIES FRIENDLY TO THEM ARE HARDLY ABLE OR DESIROUS OF MAKING UP THE PRESENT SHORTFALL IN GRAIN.
WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

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